



Hi Brian,

We've heard (article below) that Watertown will be accepting fracking wastewater. Has DEC issued a permit mod to incorporate a TDS limit for Watertown? Incidentally, do you know which other two POTWs are seeking a permit for the fracking waste?

Thanks,
Michelle

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City to accept fracking waste

3-2 VOTE: Council allows plant to treat more flowback fluid

By [ROBERT BRAUCHLE](#)

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Despite a push from Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham and Councilwoman Roxanne M. Burns, the City Council voted Monday night to continue accepting wastewater produced by a natural gas company using the controversial hydro-fracking process.

The decision comes after the council learned late last week that Gastem Inc. is asking the city to treat another 80,000 gallons of flowback fluid. The city accepted and treated 35,000 from the Quebec-based company in January after spending little more than a year obtaining a permit from the state Department of Environmental Conservation to do so.

Ms. Burns's motion for the council to issue a formal declaration stating it will not accept the wastewater was defeated 3-2 Monday night, with councilmen Jeffrey M. Smith and Joseph M. Butler Jr. and Councilwoman Teresa R. Macaluso voting against the resolution.

Ms. Burns picked up support from the mayor, who has said that disposing of the fluid should be an issue the state and municipalities of the Southern Tier should be concerned with and not the city of Watertown.

"This is an economic development issue for the Southern Tier," Mr. Graham said. "The state is receiving state tax revenue and we're just spending an awful lot of time up here being accommodating for something that is not of our doing or our making."

Mr. Smith said the city should continue accepting the waste water, but only if fees are increased because the city is offering a "premium service."

"If I understand your line of reasoning, economic development in other counties affects the state and the amount of revenue the state collects affects how much aid we are getting," Mr. Smith said following the mayor's comments.

The briny water is produced by the extraction of natural gas from shale deposits thousands of feet below

the surface. Large volumes of water, sand and chemicals are pumped into the rock formation, fracturing the rock, which then releases the natural gas. The water pumped back to the surface is laced with naturally occurring radioactive material, salt and other chemicals. Well operators must either store the fluid in an underground well, haul it out of state for treatment or get the state's approval to have it processed at an in-state sewage treatment facility.

Last summer, Gastem drilled a 5,000 foot vertical well into the Utica Shale formation using the hydro-fracking process. The additional 80,000 gallons it is requesting the city to treat is expected to be produced when the company drills Sheckels No. 1 in Otsego County. Further information about the type of well or its exact location was unavailable Monday night.

The initial 35,000 gallons produced by Gastem were treated successfully at the plant and discharged into the Black River, plant Supervisor Michael J. Sligar said.

Mr. Sligar has said that because the plant's construction, and subsequent expansion to accommodate Fort Drum's growth in the late 1980s, was largely state and federally funded, the city should be compelled as a service to the state to treat the waste water.

While the city was the only municipality in the state permitted to treat the waste water in January, Mr. Sligar said Monday that he knows of two other municipal treatment plant operators that are trying to get the proper permits to treat flowback fluid, although he would not name them.

"I'm pleased to report that there are two plants that are working on the facilities to be in the same position as us," he said. "The bad news it's probably going to take them a year or two to get where we are now."

Last year, ProPublica, a nonprofit for-hire journalism group, contacted 109 of the 135 plants in New York listed by DEC as having the ability to treat the fluid and found that operators from only three have any interest in accepting it.

While the council members have taken aim at the meager \$1,125 the city received for treating the fluid, it has not followed up with formal discussion about what those additional charges for treatment should be.

A letter from Gastem to the city indicates Sheckels No. 1 is scheduled to be drilled in May and the waste water would be ready to be analyzed in June.

<http://watertowndailytimes.com/article/20100406/NEWS03/304069948>